Assuring the Future of Federally-Funded Embryonic Stem Cell Research

Greg Saggio D.O.

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Abstract

Stem cell research holds enormous promise for curing debilitating diseases such as spinal cord injury, Parkinson’s disease, and diabetes. Embryonic stem cells can potentially be valuable tools for research and clinical applications because they can turn into any cell type in the body. Since President Obama’s executive order to allow use of federal dollars for research using human embryonic stem cells, there have been three years of legal battles all based on the interpretation of the Dickey-Wicker amendment, which restricts the use of federal funds for creating, destroying, or knowingly injuring human embryos.

Researchers say that the uncertainty of federal funding has negative impacts on research. Many researchers switched to do research in the fields of adult stem cells because federal funding is more stable and the ethical dilemma is not present. Researchers are skeptical to ask for funding only to have the funding disappear. Also, any collaborators are hesitant to start research with individuals using embryos due to the fear of losing funding.

The legal community should not be able to stop and start scientific research. The Dickey-Wicker amendment should be repealed to assure the ambiguity surrounding this topic is removed. Scientific research could proceed unabated and potentially find the cures and treatments for so many diseases that plague society and dramatically lower the cost of health care.